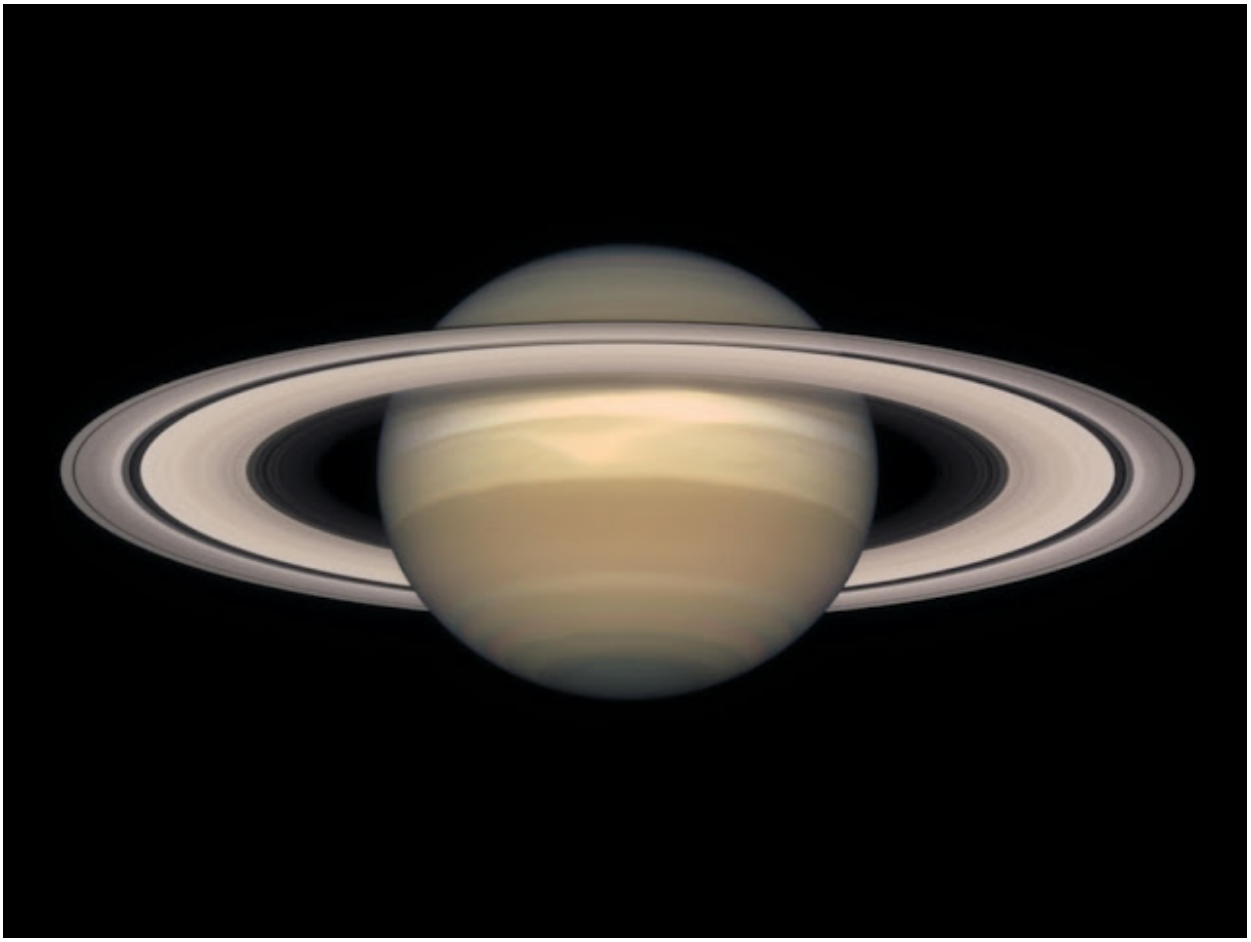
28th November 2011

Saturn, the myth

Hello,

I offer you a small study on **Saturn** in alchemy:

Astronomers have long considered it the highest of the planets.
The poets held him for the father of **Jupiter** , and the son of heaven.
Mythologists have seen time in **Saturn** because it was gradually confused with the God **Chronos** (For reasons for which I have not found satisfactory explanations)
Alchemist apprentices associate Saturn with the lowest of metals, namely **lead** , which is the heaviest and imperfect of metals. (*"Saturn"* , as *"lead"* is said in Hebrew *Ophereth* .)

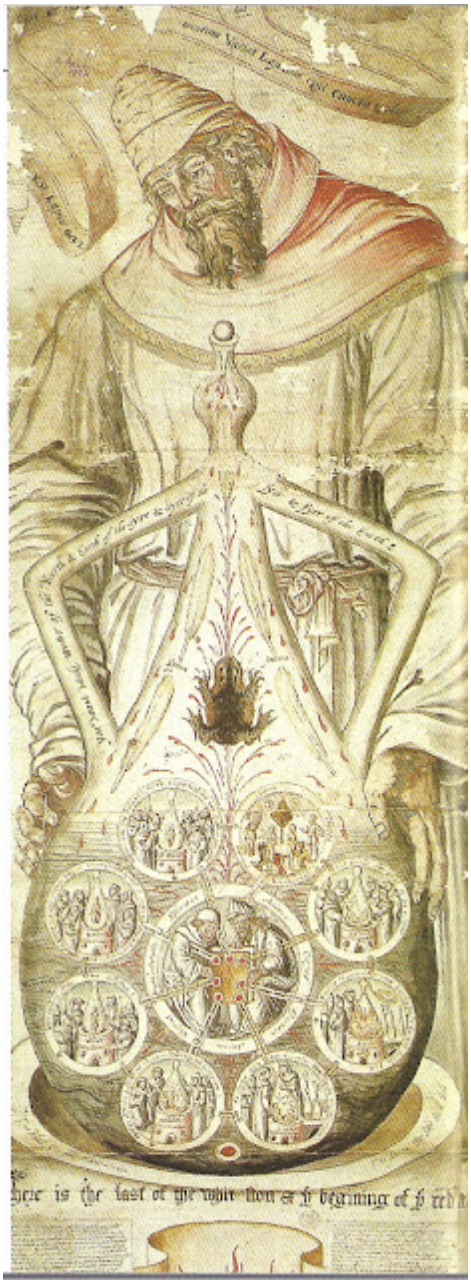


[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-X5OpUsOsCCg/TsfkETRkjal/AAAAAAAAAUo/QTjx_0pK9Yw/s1600/Saturne+-+plan%25C3%25A8te.jpg]
The Planet Saturn

Lead in alchemy is the metal associated with the **color black** , with putrefaction, and with the first stage of Opus: ***Nigredo*** .

The expressions "reign of saturn" or "regime of saturn", present in many treatises, refer to the black work. Saturn alludes to materiality, imperfection and melancholy. It is the raw material in its first stage. Saturn's regime is double because it concerns **Matter** as well as **Spirit** , and it lasts as long as "darkness" explains **Dom Pernety** *(Alchemist of the 18th century)*

But lead is not a worthless material that should be thrown away: *"Know, however, that our lead is more precious than any gold; it is silt, the soul of gold is carried with Mercury for giving birth to Dam and Eve his wife"* explains **Philalèthe** *(Alchemist of the XVII° century)* in his treatise *"Open entrance to the closed palace of the King"*
In a similar way **George Ripley** *(Dutch Alchemist of the XV° century)* makes *"our lead " the compost* !



[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-Fp4Y58byotU/Ts65mNeU9BI/AAAAAAAAAW4/6FObKM_YJEk/s1600/Alchimiste+-+George+Ripley.jpeg]
A follower of alchemy
Plate taken from a treatise by George Ripley - 17th century

"Transforming lead into gold is the exact work of human growth, that which begins to operate the knight, or any being who lives his first interior birth." (Annick de Souzenelle in "The symbolism of the human body" page 122)
The correspondence between the reign of Saturn and the biblical myth of **Jonas** in the belly of the whale is total (On this subject read the article: **Jonas [http://aqua-permanens.blogspot.com/2011/12/jonas.html]**)

If the realization of the philosopher's stone, that is to say the full relation to the "inner Self", is done in three stages: ***Nigredo, Albedo and Rubedo*** (That is to say black, white and red) the first stage or Nigredo corresponds in the outline in modern language at **the**

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-U82db5RQTsc/TsuD2NuunUI/AAAAAAAAAVg/E4jo_xfj2qk/s1600/ombre+1.jpg]

Saturn is a very ancient deity whose cult was linked to agriculture. The legend says that he was chased from Olympus by his own son Jupiter, and that Saturn then took up residence on the Capitoline Hill at the foot of which a temple dedicated to him was built.

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-6HFcerSBxtc/Tsq_Xm29_YI/AAAAAAAAAVA/uO5zRqMk13I/s1600/Saturne+-+Fresque+de+Pomp%25C3%25A9i.jpeg]

Saturn (Chronos with his sickle)
Fresco from Pompeii - End of the 2nd - 1st century BC

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-Rq3oqNUzqQk/TsrEyLfgUNI/AAAAAAAAAVQ/AyQbFOpuuB0/s1600/Saturne+-+Temple+sur+le+mont+Capitole+2-+Rome.jpg]

Remains of the Temple of Saturn - Rome

Later, Saturn was confused with **Cronos** one of the most important Titans. Cronos also ruled the other Titans, or first generation of related Gods of the Greek creation myth, until his son Zeus *(Roman Jupiter)* dethroned him and seized power.

Cronos *(Roman Saturn)* son of Uranus (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth) reigned over the Universe with his sister-wife **Rhea** *(Roman Ops).* But the day came when one of their sons, the future ruler of heaven and earth, called **Zeus** *(Roman Jupiter)*rebelled against his father. Indeed, Chronos, who had learned that one of his children would dethrone him one day, judged that the only way to ward off fate was to demand that his wife deliver to him each newborn he immediately devoured. But Rhea succeeds in saving her sixth child, Zeus, from this fatal fate. When Zeus came into the world, she offered a large stone wrapped in linen to her husband, which he promptly swallowed, mistaking it for the baby. Later, when he became an adult, Zeus, helped by his grandmother the earth (**Gaïa**), forced his father to disgorge the said stone (at the same time as the first five children) and it was deposited in Delphi.

The children of Cronus are: **Hestia** (Roman Vesta), **Hades** (Roman Pluto), **Poseidon**(Roman Neptune), **Demeter** (Roman Ceres), **Hera** (Roman Juno) and **Zeus** (Roman Jupiter)

Gaia (Earth, mother and wife of Ouranos) provides Saturn with a sickle in order to maim his father Ouranos the sky (Roman Uranus) Saturn thus became the master of the Universe after having driven out his father.

[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-HNumxfUlaqQ/TsuBOxy3Z0I/AAAAAAAAAVY/sjDlcldVekw/s1600/Chronos.JPG]

Cronos who devours one of these children

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-lcZjnB7CCXM/TszxI7g2NBI/AAAAAAAAAVo/CJoc-yWLmm8/s1600/Rh%25C3%25A9a+pr%25C3%25A9sente+une+pierre+%25C3%25A0+Cronos.jpg]

Rhea presenting a swaddled stone to Cronus
Drawing of the bas-relief of a Roman altar.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-lG5-p3CCMUM/Ts7DzwLPhdI/AAAAAAAAAXQ/cdVn24SLuH0/s1600/Saturne+mutile+Uranus+2.jpg]
"Saturn maims Uranus"

So we see that the myth of Saturn is part of **a story of parricide** (the murder of the father). Ouranos, the father of Saturn who did not like children, was a very bad father. Saturn was also a very bad father (To say the least...)
We can notice on the one hand that there is no filiation between father and son. Nothing is transmitted. On the other hand, in a certain way, the same murder is reproduced from one generation to another: Saturn kills Ouranos, and Jupiter drives out Saturn. Finally, for the son to find his place, it seems that the father must die or disappear!

None of this is very healthy, and ultimately does not allow the Opus process to unfold.

[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-HGQ4GpHD6x8/TtPfqut6D8I/AAAAAAAAAXo/XgCTR4zct_A/s1600/Cosmos.jpg]
A photograph of the Cosmos

In the Middle Ages the image of Saturn, like those of **Venus** or **Jupiter** , is identified with a planet. As it is the slowest of the stars (it takes about 30 years to make its revolution around the sun) Saturn represents the image of old age.

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-bUnm7Qua0ls/Tsq2sdBdwpI/AAAAAAAAAU4/E1zGtBAKXZM/s1600/Saturne+-+Miniature+1403.jpeg]

Saturn: Medieval Miniature - circa 1403

Let's look at the medieval image above:
Instead of the sickle, Saturn holds a shovel in his hand, reminiscent of his former role as the agricultural deity.
Saturn is represented here as an old man.
Fulcanelli makes it the symbol of the raw material (or *"Materia Prima"*) whose death is imminent (alchemical death) and whose rebirth is therefore promised.

[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-GQAwa8z3MMA/TtSipO_iRKI/AAAAAAAAAZI/46VDpy4_NJc/s1600/Saturne+1+-+De+Sphaera%252C+manuscrit+italien+-+XV%25C2%25B0+si%25C3%25A8cle.jpeg]

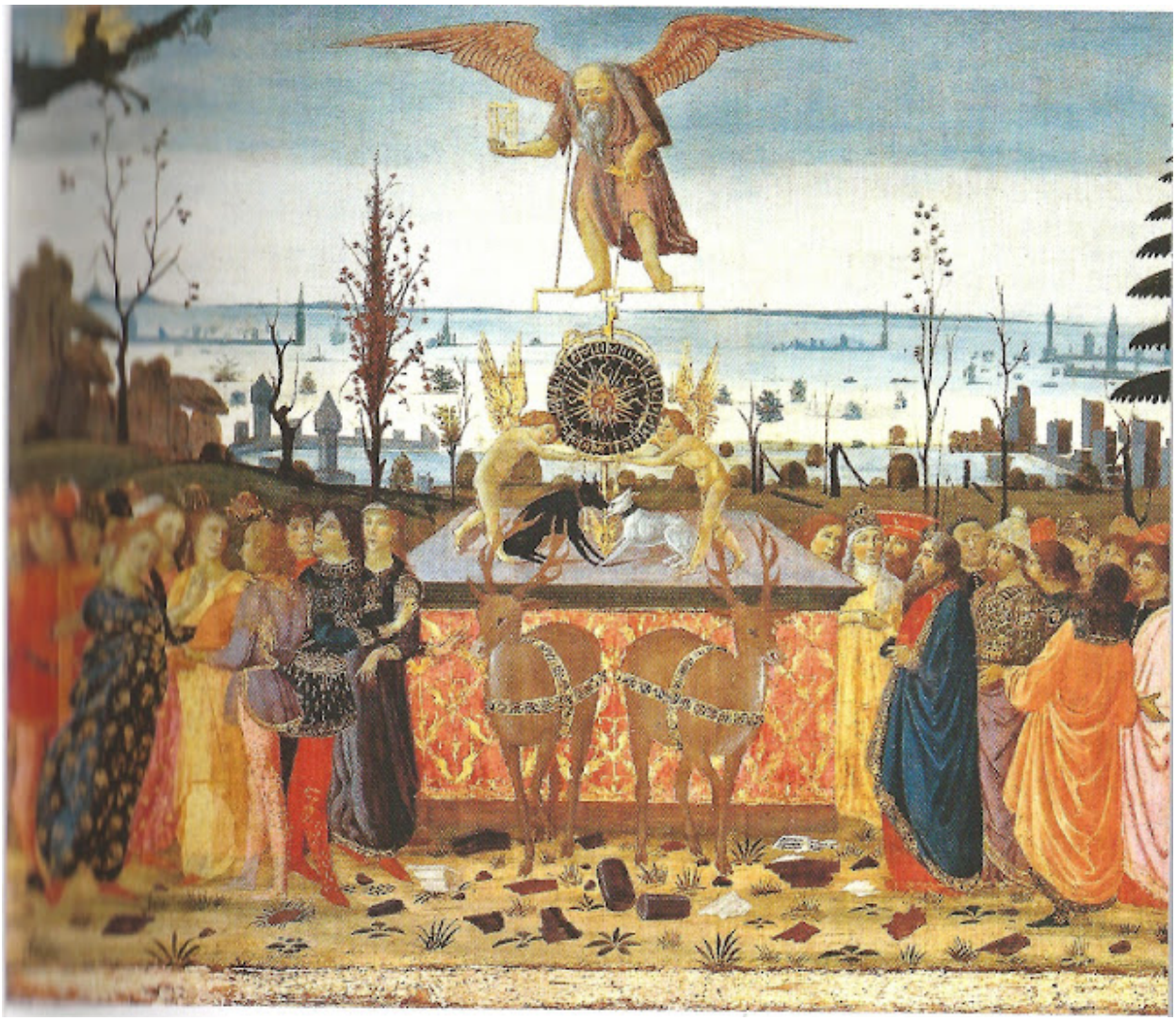
Saturn, *ruling planet of the signs of Capricorn and Aquarius*
"De Sphaera", Italian manuscript - 15th century

Julius Sperber *(Alias Julianus de Campis, 16th century German alchemist and kabbalist and Rosi-Crucians)* makes Saturn, as a planet at the far periphery, the circumference around the central point that would run outward, or, on the contrary, towards what the circumference would roll up.

The whole great work is there: Either the Nigredo remains at the periphery and is observed as an Object, and nothing happens for the adept, or else it is considered at its center and observed as a Subject, is to say as "Living Stone" in power. The process of individuation can only take place on this condition.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-cE0JE_e-ZgM/TtM6PNAmZAI/AAAAAAAAAXY/jXqmDWhMzlg/s1600/Saturne+mangeant+ses+enfants.jpg]

"Saturn eating his children", illustration from Testard 1496



[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-CRutzFvfA8M/Tsq1kc27_GI/AAAAAAAAAUw/G24rYUqrAQ8/s1600/Saturne+-+Le+triomphe+du+temps.jpeg]
"The Triumph of Time" Jacopo del Sellaio - circa 1485

Let's look at the table above:
In the painting below, the sickle which originally symbolized the harvest of cereals, becomes the symbol of time which cuts down the lives of men.
Moreover, Saturn, thanks to a wand he holds in his right hand, turns the hands of the time clock.
We can observe the middle-aged characters at the bottom of the painting on the right, and a group of young people on the left.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-yiAGOg_JpFs/TtM65XZoecI/AAAAAAAAAXg/e-sNlJooR78/s1600/Chronos+1.jpg]

Cronos with his hourglass and his sickle.

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-r-yDTW2dZ1Y/Tsq_3_mwEyI/AAAAAAAAAVI/S3y9aM2m1pU/s1600/Saturne+-+La+danse+de+la+vie+humaine.jpeg]

"The Dance of Human Life" Nicolas Poussin - 1638

Let's look at this table:

The four dancing women represent the four seasons that dance in a circle to evoke the incessant successions of passing time. On the right Saturn is represented as an old winged man because time "flies". Saturn plays the lyre to set the rhythm of life on earth. Aces feet a cherub holds an hourglass in his hand. Another cherub on the left makes soap bubbles which evokes the transience of life. Still on the left, a Hermes bust of **Janus** with two faces evokes images of the past and the future.

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-s4nXKPjrm8U/Ts6oYcTpzgI/AAAAAAAAAVw/ckirCZBwOCw/s1600/Janus+-Vatican.jpg]

Bust of Janus *- Vatican Museum*

One face observes the past while the other looks to the future.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-Bsa4OQf4sBM/Ts6pT1-4L7I/AAAAAAAAAV4/kWBWstGnQwQ/s1600/Saturne+-+Goya.JPG]
*"Saturn devouring one of his sons" - Attributed to **Francisco Goya** - 1820*

Let's look at the table:
Notice the violence in this painting, the wild, wide-eyed Saturn stalking the body of one of its children. This is not a newborn but the body of a horribly mutilated young child.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-nXJ5-Pus-ws/TtPhoBVTYuI/AAAAAAAAAX4/ad5BesHFMH4/s1600/Michael+Ma%25C3%25AFer+-+Atalanta+Fugiens+-+Embl%25C3%25A8me+XII.jpeg.jpeg]

*"Fugitive Atalanta" by **Michael Maïer** (1618), Emblem XII*

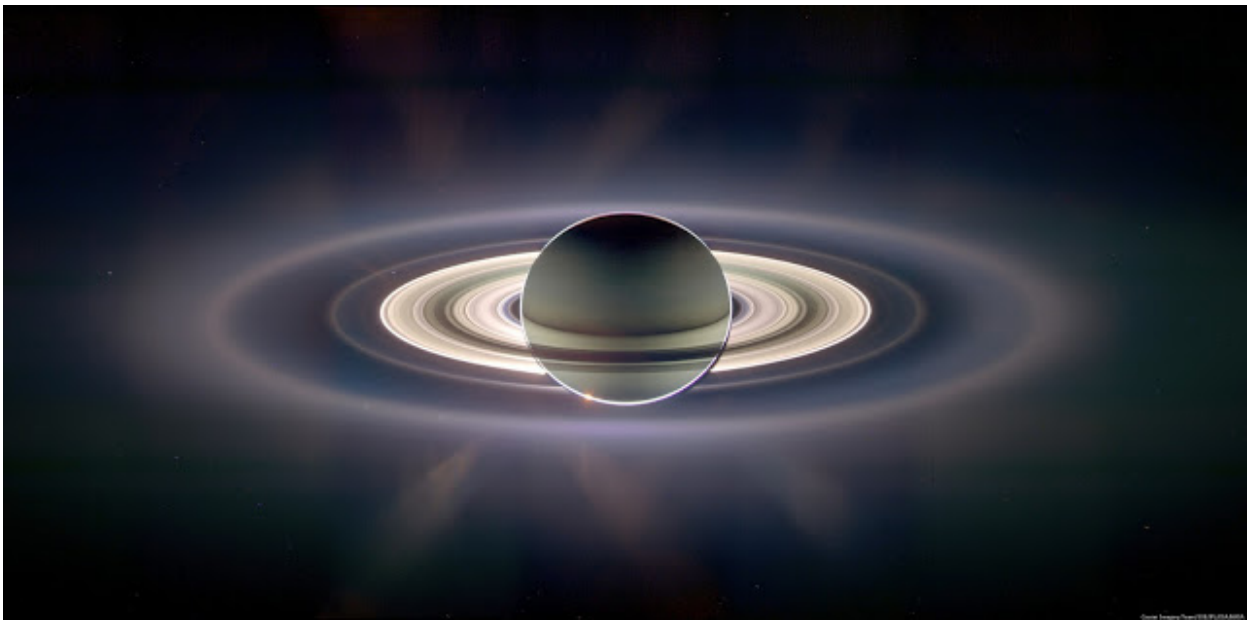
[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-JZ6w_LuH8KA/Ts6x4ITjqbI/AAAAAAAAAWo/znAHohFib6k/s1600/Saturne+et+le+fils.jpeg]

"The stone that Saturn devoured in place of his son and
that he vomits was placed on Helicon Summit as a monument to mortals."

For the commentary of the image above read the article: **The Alchemical Mountain [http://aqua-permanens.blogspot.fr/2011/11/la-montagne-alchimique.html]**

For the continuation of this small study on Saturn in Alchemy, read the article: **Saturn, lead [http://aqua-permanens.blogspot.fr/2011/11/saturne-2.html]**

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-KSOs6MTcSjQ/TtUBKoaR9BI/AAAAAAAAAbo/rZxAyQrsWgk/s1600/Saturne+-+Signe.png]



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Posted 28th November 2011 by L'alchimiste

2 Show comments

Anonymous June 28, 2016 at 02:25

Thank you very much for this study rich in history on SATURN.

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